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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. AND CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies continued to focus their January 7 news coverage on the ongoing probe into former President Chen Shui-bian's legal case, on the dual citizenship controversy surrounding legislator Diane Lee, and on cross-Straits relations. The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" ran a banner headline on page eleven reading "Richard Bush is Reportedly to Become U.S. Representative to Taiwan." The pro-unification "United Daily News" also ran an exclusive news story on page two, citing Bonnie Glaser, a senior associate at the U.S.-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, as saying that the next U.S. President Barack Obama will promote a "positive-sum" rather than "zero-sum game" among the U.S., China and Taiwan in the future.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "United Daily News" op-ed piece discussed the Taiwan policy speech recently delivered by Chinese President Hu Jintao. The article said Hu's six-point proposal has restricted the Ma Ying-jeou Administration's options for cross-Straits relations while reaching out to the DPP. An op-ed in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times," written by a Canadian freelance journalist, said one of the indicators showing the new U.S. administration's approach toward Taiwan will be to see whether Washington will approve Taiwan's arms procurement request. A separate "Taipei Times" op-ed, written by former AIT Chairman Nat Bellocchi, urged the KMT and the DPP to work out their differences before Taiwan decides on how to deal with China. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" discussed the incoming Obama Administration's policy toward the cross-Straits situation. The article urged Washington "to refrain from providing uncritical support to the KMT's excessive intimacy" with the Chinese Communist Party. End summary.

A) "Hu [Jintao's] Six-Point Speech Restricts Ma Ying-jeou's [Options] While Reaching out to the DPP"

Associate Professor Tung Li-wen from the Department of Public Security, Central Police University, opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (1/7):

"Chinese Communist Party [CCP] General Secretary Hu Jintao talked about the 'Six Points' on an occasion marking the 30th anniversary of [China's January 1, 1979] 'Message to Compatriots in Taiwan.' China has officially made its first move toward Taiwan, whereas Hu has shown his sense of urgency regarding [cross-Straits] talks over reunification. No longer will Hu allow the Ma Ying-jeou Administration to just take and not give or to stall for new changes. Neither will the CCP tolerate infighting in Taiwan between the Blue and the Green camps; instead, it simply went ahead to demand a dialogue between the Red [i.e. the CCP itself] and the Green. The time for a turn of events in the cross-Straits relations has already commenced. ...

"There are two goals behind Hu's six-point proposal toward Taiwan: First, [he] wants to put an end to the various controversies in China caused by the rapid development of cross-Straits relations since May 20, 2008, and set the tone for its new and future course of Taiwan policy. That way he can also gain control of the power to

dictate the political talks across the Taiwan Strait for the next stage. Second, he wants to give clear responses to the Ma Administration's fundamental position toward cross-Strait relations.

Judging from this perspective, Hu's Six Points are [tantamount to] a request by China to Taiwan for, as well as a position paper on, political talks on peaceful unification across the Taiwan Strait. The six-point proposal has the following three characteristics: First, it restricts future [options] and affirms the goal of reunification. ... The first red line drawn by Hu for Ma here is that 'both sides of the Taiwan Strait will return to unification, which is not to restructure sovereignty or territory but to end the political confrontation.' It means that the unification of China must not touch on the remodeling of the forms of state and government. In other words, for China's reunification, [Beijing] has excluded the possibilities of [forming] a federation or confederation.

"Second, [the six-point proposal] restricts the status quo and includes the 1992 Consensus in the one-China framework. The second red line drawn by Hu for Ma is that 'even though both sides of the Taiwan Strait have yet to reunify with each other, it does not represent a split in China's territory and sovereignty. Instead, it is a political confrontation -- a legacy of China's civil wars.' Here [Hu] has officially eliminated the fact that there are two sovereignties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait as implied in Ma's advocacy of 'mutual non-denial' [between the two sides]. He has also turned down the call by the KMT to 'face reality.' ... Third, [the proposal] restricts international [efforts] and removes U.S. influence in cross-Strait relations. Hu's six-point proposal mentioned again the long-forgotten statement that 'unification is an internal affair of China, which will not allow any external interference.' Also, [Hu] has altered China's strategy of 'restraining Taiwan via the United States,' which it has adopted

since 1997, and he has further called to international society that 'China's reunification will not endanger any other countries' interests but will merely facilitate prosperity and stability in Asia-Pacific and in the world.' As a result, according to Hu's planning, Beijing does have its international concerns when it comes to China's reunification, and he has picked the perfect timing -- a time of transfer of power between the old U.S. administration to a new one -- to say it. ..."

B) "Taiwan: Falling into China's Orbit?"

Stephen Nelson, a Canadian freelance journalist based in Toronto, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (1/7):

"... Clearly, this year will prove to be a critical year for Taiwan. Either it will continue on course with the great Asian experiment in democracy, or it will become just another subservient satellite of China. ... To find out which way the solar wind is blowing, we need to look no further than President Ma himself, someone critics have called 'a windsock' and 'a chameleon on a weather vane.' An early indicator will be how Ma intends to proceed against his old political foes. ..."

"Another indicator will be how the new Democratic government in Washington's approach to Taiwan. If the US goes ahead with its proposed weapons sales to Taipei, it means Washington feels that Taiwan still has a future as a de facto independent democracy: a moon in Chinese space, but not necessarily a Chinese moon. But if the US decides to deep-freeze these weapons sales, it means that Washington believes Taiwan has already moved too close to China and that Taiwan cannot be trusted as an ally. In that case, if the Taiwanese want to be pulled out of China's orbit, they'll have to do it themselves. ..."

C) "Responding as One to Beijing's Soft Talks"

Nat Bellocchi, former AIT chairman and now a special adviser to the Liberty Times Group, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (1/7):

"This year will see a continuation of talks between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, with an increasing number of agreements on economic and cultural issues being reached. China will continue its soft dialogue with Taiwan - talks that will not change the

fundamental political equation. Taiwan might find it more difficult to respond given the negative appraisal about the government's performance in a recent survey by a major local newspaper. ... The KMT and the DPP's reaction to Hu's statement shows that aside from cross-strait differences, there appears to be an even larger gap between the two main parties. As a democracy, these two parties need to discuss issues more openly to strengthen the nation's view and voice on dealing with China."

D) "Taiwan Strait Will Stay 'Hot' Issue for Obama"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (1/7):

"In less than two weeks, Democrat Barack Obama will take office as the 44th president of the United States of America amid a worldwide economic and financial meltdown, festering wars in Iraq and Afghanistan left by his rightist Republican predecessor George W. Bush and a host of other severe and multifaceted global challenges. It is therefore widely assumed that the incoming Obama will put East Asian affairs on the backburner of its priority agenda, especially since, with the exception of uncertainties over North Korea and its nuclear program, Asia seems to be less crisis fraught than other regions. We believe this superficial impression will prove illusory since there are actually numerous and worrisome sources of political uncertainty embedded in the Asia-Pacific region, including in the Taiwan Strait, that merit closer attention from the new occupant in the White House. ...

"While most Washington pundits may not accept charges that the Ma administration is 'selling out' Taiwan, the continued high rate of dissatisfaction over his government's performance in credible opinion polls, including deep division over its cross-strait policies, indicate that Ma is now walking on a political tightrope. At the same time, it is becoming increasingly evident that Beijing has been feeding Ma and his KMT regime sugar-coated political poison, as reflected by the December 31 'offer' of PRC State Chairman and CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao to make 'reasonable arrangements' for Taiwan's international participation, perhaps including the World Health Assembly, in accord with Beijing's 'one China principle' which posits that 'Taiwan is part of China.' Hu's explicit exclusion from consideration any 'arrangement' that would even hint at 'two Chinas or one China, one Taiwan' exposed as a fantasy Ma's claim to the Taiwan electorate that the cross-strait 'reconciliation' was taking place under the umbrella of the KMT's notion of 'one China with separate interpretations' or, even more absurdly, 'the Republic of

China constitutional framework.' ...

"Instead, Beijing has taken full advantage of the Ma administration's urgency to secure a breakthrough in cross-strait relations by portraying an international image that both sides of the Taiwan Strait are moving unification when what is actually happening can be more accurately described as a reconciliation of two authoritarian parties. If decision-makers in the future Obama administration believe that this course is inevitably leading to 'stability,' they would be risking a grave political 'blowback,' especially if Taiwan - centric political and social forces unite against the resurfacing KMT party - state for its excessive tilting toward Beijing and its regression in domestic civic, human and judicial rights.

"Washington's foreign policy establishment may have disliked Chen's brash assertion of Taiwan's identity, but they should keep in mind the dangers involved in the fact that Ma's KMT administration has adopted radical measures based on partisan ideology without careful and integrated calculation of external and internal risks and without any serious effort to gain domestic consent or consensus. In sum, ensuring lasting reduction of tensions in the Taiwan Strait will require Washington to refrain from providing uncritical support to the KMT's excessive intimacy with the CCP, remain alert against a regression in Taiwan's hard-won democracy and human rights standards, and keep a close watch to prevent the emergence of any military or security imbalance in the PRC's favor due to the KMT's embrace of Beijing's 'great China' umbrella."

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